

44. *Syrup of Asparagus.* By A. LATOUR and ROZIERES.—The syrup of asparagus has justly obtained a high standing, from the marked sedative properties it possesses. But its tendency to fermentation prevents its being kept for any time without its undergoing a great alteration, which develops an unpleasant putrid odour, and deprives it of all its medicinal properties. To obviate this, the Journal of Medical Chemistry of 1830, proposes to dry the shoots, and to make the syrup as it is wanted, from an infusion of the dry plant.

This plan does not attain the desired result, as it is extremely difficult to dry these shoots, on account of their succulent nature, and also because the aromatic principle is destroyed by this process; we have endeavoured to discover some mode, which whilst it would enable us to prepare the syrup at any time, would also preserve the full qualities of the fresh plant. The following has appeared to us to completely fulfil these indications:—

Preparations.—1. The asparagus shoots are to be reduced to a pulp, and the juice separated by means of a strong press. The quantity of juice furnished by the early shoots, is generally equal to two-thirds of their weight; later shoots only afford about half their weight.

The juice after having stood to settle, is decanted and weighed, then heated in a water bath to coagulate the alomine, afterwards filtered and evaporated to the consistence of honey; when a quantity of sugar equal in weight to the juice before concentration, is to be added. This aqueous *saccharole* is to be dried in a stove.

2. To the marc or parenchyma is to be added two-thirds of its weight of alcohol at 30°, and the whole suffered to macerate for three days in a close vessel, then subjected to pressure through a linen cloth, and the same quantity of alcohol again added to the marc, and the mixture suffered to macerate till the next day, when it is to be boiled for five minutes, subjected to pressure as before; and the products of the two operations united together.

This mixture is to be distilled till three-fourths of the alcohol employed has passed over; when it has cooled, the same quantity of sugar as above is to be added, and the *alcoholic saccharole* which results is to be dried.

These preparations are to be kept in well-stopped bottles, and from them a syrup may be extemporaneously prepared at all seasons in the following manner. Equal portions of each are to be taken and dissolved at a moderate heat in half their weight of water. When the syrup has been heated to ebullition, it is to be withdrawn from the fire and strained.

This syrup unites all the conditions required in good syrup of asparagus, and retains in the fullest manner the aromatic taste of the vegetable. The sedative properties of this syrup are much augmented in this preparation, as has been amply tested in practice. But in which of the principles peculiar to this plant does the sedative power reside? Numerous researches on this subject have been made by Mr. Johnson, who attributes it to a resinous body, from which he states that he makes his syrup.

Anxious to verify this fact, and to possess a readily prepared syrup of asparagus, we made the following experiment, Mr. Johnson not having published his method of manipulation:—

Thinking that the resinous substance would be found in the parenchyma of the asparagus after expression, as no trace of it was discoverable in the juice, we treated a certain quantity of this substance previously dried, with double its weight of alcohol at 31°. At the end of three days, the alcohol acquired a beautiful green colour. When boiled it deposited a great quantity of a green substance, part of which adhered to the sides of the vessel, and another floated on the surface in the form of globules. We separated this substance by decantation, and discovered with astonishment that this pretended resinous principle presented all the characters of a fixed oil.

This oil is of a beautiful dark green colour, which, however, is very fugitive; for an alcoholic solution of it, exposed to the rays of the sun, soon lost its peculiar tint, and the oil which remained after the evaporation of the menstruum, was only of a yellowish hue. It has a peculiar and powerful aromatic

odour, but a mawkish taste. It is somewhat viscous; at the temperature of 53° F., its consistence is that of a soft grease or of thick oil, which does not liquify till 75°. Placed in a tube, and cautiously exposed to the flame of a spirit lamp, it first assumes a reddish colour, and is then decomposed, affording the usual products of the oils, and leaving a tolerably voluminous charcoal.

Water has no action on it—ether and the oils dissolve it in all proportions. Alcohol at 31° readily takes it up. Nitric acid dissolves it without apparent decomposition, as does also hydrochloric acid, which appears to heighten the colour. Sulphuric acid dissolves it, acquiring a slight red tinge. By the action of a regulated heat, the colour becomes blood-red, and the solution is thickened. Water precipitates it in a grayish form.

The alkalies dissolve it rapidly, and the acids precipitate it from this combination in white flocculi. All these characters demonstrate to us the existence of a fatty oil extracted by the alcohol. This appears to us to be possessed of important medical properties.

It is certain that the syrup of asparagus, prepared either with the alcoholic, or with the aqueous *saccharole*, has a remarkably sedative property, in retarding the circulation and in acting specially on the heart.

From what has been said, it results that the union of the two preparations enables us to obtain the whole of the sedative principles of this substance. Moreover, pastilles may be made which may render the administration of this remedy more easy. We propose the following formula for them:—

Saccharole of asparagus,	-	-	-	-	2	parts
Sugar in fine powder,	-	-	-	-	1	do.
Mucilage of gum Arabic made with orange flower water,	-	-	-	-	Q. S.	

Make pastilles of twenty grains.

These pastilles should be kept in a well-stopped bottle in a dry place, as they are apt to attract moisture.

A jelly may also be made with this saccharole by adding a solution of ichthyocolla to it. This forms an agreeable compound which might be advantageously used as an article of diet.—*Journal de Pharmacie*, Dec. 1833.

PRACTICE OF MEDICINE.

45. *Treatment of Ileitis.* By WM. STOKES, M. D.—Laxatives are to be employed in enteritis, on the same principle that emetics are used in cases where corrosive poison has been taken into the stomach. We are not to expect to be able to cure the disease by the use of laxatives, nor are we to have recourse to them in every case; we employ these remedies where we have decided evidence of the existence of offending matter in the bowels. We may meet with a case in the early stage under such circumstances, that the removal of the irritating matter by judicious purgation may completely relieve the patient, and this, I believe, is the foundation on which the superstruction of the British purgative practice in ileitis and tabes mesenterica was raised. It was concluded, that a laxative treatment, which had on many occasions succeeded in removing the first symptoms of the disease, would necessarily cure it in all stages and cases. This, I need not tell you, is wrong. Whenever you give purgatives or laxatives in enteritis, bear this in mind, that the effect which you have to produce is to be brought about at the least possible risk. If you can unload the bowels with a little castor oil or rhubarb, or some mild neutral salt, it is much better than to have recourse to calomel, or scammony, or colocynth. As a general rule, drastic purgatives must be avoided in inflammation of the mucous membrane of the intestines. The school of Broussais committed an error, on the one hand, by never admitting the use of laxatives, and British practitioners have been wrong, on the other hand, by giving too much purgative medicine. The